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their class origin. There is no sphere of life, not even an ordinary social gathering, in which the representatives of the various classes can meet, as it were, on 'neutral ground'.

The social stratification stretches beyond the formalized rank system embodied in the political structure. It embraces the whole country and absorbs and reinterprets in its own sense the cultural configuration of Nupe at large. On this wider scale the commoners of the town, the people of no name and title, rank higher than the people and tribes outside the capital, with their petty village titles and offices. The citizens of Bida look down upon the *gberiši*, the 'heathen' in the villages, ridiculing their habits and character, their fashions and the way they talk, their lack of education and 'urbanity'.

These differences of customs and habits are real enough. But they are underlined on the part of the Bida people by that credulity and fondness of exaggeration which we encountered already in the discussion of the village community and which, here even more strongly, expresses the biased self-centred interest of a group strongly conscious of its cultural identity. I have recorded many sensational accounts of the religious customs of the *gberiši* in which the Bida people firmly believe, unaware, or unwilling to admit, that they are quite untrue. Bida informants told me that among the peasants and pagans women practise the craft of medicine and not men as in Bida—another statement which I could easily disprove. Or I was warned not to believe anything that villagers say—'they are all liars'. Even if it were possible to test quantitatively this collective libel, it would, I am afraid, hardly reveal any real difference between town and country. What I have called, in the discussion of the village community, an ideology sustaining the assertion of group identity subserves here the assertion of (in a loose sense) class distinctions.

To return to the real, concrete, cultural differences linked with class. The framework of status which we have outlined is filled out with a multitude of minor traits, differences of conduct, extending even to walks of life which may appear only remotely connected with the central political and economic structure. We shall meet with these differences in every stage of our investigation; let me anticipate here a few typical instances as they would strike the observer of Nupe everyday life. He would note class differences even in one of the most elementary wants—nutrition: rich and poor have different food habits. The poor eat little meat, chicken very rarely (unless for religious reasons); but meat cooked in palm-oil is eaten every day by the wealthy, and chicken-and-rice, the most delicious food the Nupe know, comes on the table at least once a week. In Bida the sorghum or millet grain is always milled to fine flour; in some peasant districts it is boiled unmilled—a preparation of food which the more refined despise, although it is undoubtedly of higher nutritive value. The people of Bida drink palm-wine, the peasants in the districts feast on sorghum-beer.

Again, in the matter of recreation: among the peasants the men dance to the music of flutes and drums, or the women sing to the clapping of hands or the beating of upturned calabashes. Among the sophisticated

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people of Bida professional women singers, accompanied by their own drummers, perform for an audience which pays for its pleasures. The uneducated pagans like to sit together on afternoons and evenings in front of their houses, chat or weave mats, or just enjoy the peace of these hours of leisure. The educated Mohammedans meet in the house of a Mallam and read with him the holy books of Islam, using even their leisure hours for furthering their education.

As regards dress: a man of standing would always, even in the privacy of his home, wear trousers and the flowing white robe, and would never appear before guests and strangers without turban. Peasants and commoners normally wear a loin-cloth and a blue cloth thrown over the shoulder, and the blue Phrygian cap which is said to be the traditional head-gear of Nupe. Only on state occasions would they don robe and turban.

People of rank have adopted, with Mohammedanism, many features of Hausa culture. In their families the Hausa custom of removing the uvula of small children is practised—a custom absent among the lower classes and unknown among the peasants. They are fond of using Hausa words and phrases; for expressions concerning the delicate topic of sex they invariably use Hausa or Arabic circumlocutions. They despise the peasants and uneducated people of the lower classes who use the crude literal expression, and who cannot embellish their speech with the more elegant phrases borrowed from Hausa.

The various features enumerated above are clearly not of the same order. Characteristic though they are of the standards valid in the different strata of Nupe society they are not equally reducible to the central facts of class structure—political and economic conditions. The evaluation of certain habits as inferior or superior is as much a matter of convention as a result of social or economic inequality. That the poor man cannot afford meat or chicken-and-rice is due to his poverty; but the preference for milled or unmilled grain or for palm-wine or sorghum-beer respectively, is a matter of taste and habit, i.e. a 'cultural' trait pure and proper. Yet rendered permanent by education, linked with habitual group-behaviour which in other, more vital, spheres of life positively reflects economic or social prerogatives, these smaller traits, too, gain the significance of class-determined behaviour. Here we grasp another aspect of class differentiation. I have said that where the attribute of inferiority or superiority is disregarded, differences of habit and living conditions in general are reduced to cultural differences in the narrow sense. This gains special significance in a society like Nupe, which has grown out of a conglomerate of various tribal groups, each with its own more or less specific culture. Some of the food habits of the 'poor' peasants are indeed the original food habits of cultural groups which have been incorporated into the kingdom. I have mentioned that the Phrygian cap, worn by peasants and commoners, is regarded as the traditional head-dress of the country. Their 'uncouth' manners, their 'primitive' customs, are part of the pagan peasant culture of the country. Similarly turban and flowing robes, or the appreciation of professional musicians and Mohammedan learning, reflect the preferences of a specific cultural

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241 for different kinds of crops. Ground-nuts, sweet potatoes, and certain vegetables are always planted in ridges, yam always in mounds. As regards the other crops, the rule is that in a first cultivation, that is, on a plot planted for the first time after having lain fallow, mounds are thrown up; in the subsequent year the mounds are turned into ridges, as a result of the practice of 'shifting' the ridges and interplanting in the second half of the planting season. The throwing up of mounds is by far the heavier and longer work. 'Lazy' farmers—in the eyes of the people—thus sometimes prefer the easier job of making ridges even in a first year's cultivation.[1] Big trees are always left standing on the farms and cultivation is carried out round them. The Nupe farmers appreciate the shade of big trees during the heat of the day. Small trees on the farm-land which do not bear fruit are lopped or cut about 4 ft. from the ground. This becomes important in the period of lying fallow; for the tree-stumps and undergrowth which the farmer leaves standing on his fields help to put the fallow land under a growth of 'bush' rather than grass, thus assisting and speeding up the regeneration of the soil.[2]

241 The cultivation on the marsh-land farms is adapted to the conditions of a natural annual irrigation by the flooded rivers and watercourses.
312 The irrigated area is divided into square plots, approximately 6 ft. by 9 ft., each consisting of from four to six ridges running parallel and two ridges at right angles on the upper and lower end. The ridges are flat and narrow; they do not connect at the corners, but leave small channels open; by means of these ridges the water from the flooded river is distributed evenly on the cultivated plots, and at the same time kept standing there.

241 In the lay-out of the Nupe farms the aesthetic aspect is strongly pronounced.
517 The farmers pay much attention to drawing their ridges nicely parallel and as straight as possible, and to distributing their mounds symmetrically over the field. The nice rounding-off of the border of a field is specially appreciated. Frequently one finds ridges and cross-ridges arranged in a symmetrical and even conspicuously ornamental pattern. Similarly, the skill and keenness of the farmer is judged by the clean look of his farm, with all weeds, leaves, and brushwood cleared away. An overgrown, untidy looking farm invariably elicits the comment: *na-gá de kokari à*, 'that man makes no effort'.

ROTATION OF CROPS

242 The Nupe system of agriculture is based on shifting cultivation combined with a well-worked-out rotation of crops. Plots are kept under cultivation for from four to seven years (see p. 205), i.e. till the land 'grows tired', and then abandoned temporarily. The individual farmer does not, however, always wait until failing crops have warned him of

[1] The mounds represent the more thorough cultivation, utilizing a deeper and, I believe, also heavier layer of the subsoil. This is shown in the fact that yam, which demands a heavy and more humid soil, is always grown on mounds, while ground-nuts, for which light sandy soil is best suitable, are invariably grown on the low ridges. (Cf. Faulkner and Mackie, op. cit., pp. 147–8.)

[2] See op. cit., p. 44.

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WANTS AND CULTURAL ASSIMILATION

Let me repeat that all these wants and incentives which are realized in the social *élite* also represent common incentives of the society at large, and of every social stratum, unattainable though they may appear in actuality. They remain 'ideals', and the inability to realize them is regarded as a failure, a shortcoming in the socio-economic system. There exist, however, certain exceptions: instances of that divergence, or rift, in the appreciation of certain wants and incentives which divides town and country. Though few in number, they occur in widely different domains of social life—nutrition, recreation, sex morality.

Certain instances concern the form of a want, the conventionalized taste in which it appears, rather than its essence. I have spoken in an earlier context of the different taste in intoxicants typical of town and country. The Bida people prefer palm-wine to the sorghum-beer which is drunk commonly in the village. Palm-wine is the native drink in the oil-palm countries of Southern Nigeria; we also find it, side by side with sorghum-beer, in certain riverain districts of Nupe where the oil-palm is cultivated. Bida itself imports palm-wine from these districts and the south. The adoption of this, as it were, alien drink by the people of Bida was explained to me as being due to the demands of Islam, which forbids fermented drinks like sorghum-beer, but permits palm-wine—at least in the eyes of the Nupe followers of the Prophet. I do not know how far this vindication of palm-wine will pass muster with Mohammedan scholars. But I think we may accept the negative feature of this interpretation, namely, the condemnation on religious grounds of sorghum-beer, which, as we shall see presently, represents a drink closely associated with pagan religious rites. Or I might quote the instance of the different styles of dance and music appreciated in Bida and in the peasant districts: in the town we find the dance of professional women-dancers who are watched by an appreciative audience; in the village the dance of peasant men and women who are performers and public in one.

In other tastes and wants town and country differ fundamentally. Let me quote two striking examples: the attitude towards sexual licence (about which I need say no more here),[1] and the attitude towards travelling. What I have said above about the appreciation of travelling in the social *élite* of the country could be extended to apply to the whole of Bida. To have travelled widely, to have 'seen the world', helps to establish the social standing of the townsman. The interest in travels even outweighs other, similar, interests. When I was collecting Nupe folk-lore I met with almost complete failure in Bida, although the villages had proved a most fruitful field. And this was the explanation which my Bida informants gave me: 'You must go to the villages to hear folk-tales. We Bida people have forgotten them all. No one wants them now. Why? Because when we tell stories, in the evenings, we like to hear about travels, and about other towns; we listen to the people who

[1] See Chaps. IX, XIX.

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184 369 484 517 can tell us about Kano, Zaria, or Lagos.' The widespread familiarity with travelling, indeed the love of travelling, which characterizes the Bida people, has no counterpart among the peasants.[1] We have heard that even journeys to another district are rare and of little appeal to the villagers.

184 369 How are we to explain this negative form of culture contact? Why did cultural assimilation stop short of these few traits while so many other incentives and wants are spreading from the capital to the rural districts? When we examined, in a previous chapter, the different sex morality in town and country, we discovered its close functional interrelation with other social facts. Behind the divergent attitude we perceived the effectiveness of political and economic factors. This also points out the answer of the present problem. Sex morality can change only together with those other social determinants. Let me recall the main facts. Negative facts, such as the absence in the village of the 'double morality' of the capital, and also the absence of a large floating population which proved one of the incentives for the creation of semi-professional prostitution in the town. Positive facts, such as the more closely knit village life, which forbids the open and condoned matrimonial laxity characteristic of Bida; the efforts of peasant family heads to provide bride-price for an early marriage of the men, and thus to maintain the labour-unit; the conditions of labour in peasant households which tend to preclude sexual promiscuity among the women. The 'negative' culture contact which we are observing does not, then, represent a failure of assimilation in certain specific domains of culture, but the inertia of a cultural whole which cannot suffer changes in these domains without undergoing far-reaching changes itself.

The same is true of the incentive of travelling. In Bida, travelling serves the political interests of the ruling group; it is helpful to the productive enterprises of the town population; and it follows the political interests converging in the capital of the kingdom. None of these factors exists in the village. On the contrary, productive organization, political and religious life, move in a narrow compass beyond which the community affords no protection or promise of attachment.

In the case of the other, minor, instances of cultural divergence, which refer only to the form which a particular satisfaction takes, one might argue that the essential similarity of the wants themselves must tend to retard a more complete assimilation. But here again we must view the situation under the aspect of the cultural whole and the close integration within the whole even of apparently ephemeral traits. The appreciation of a certain kind of drink or a certain style of dance is indeed built firmly into the framework of village culture. Thus all religious rituals involve a libation of beer. The temptation to replace it with palm-wine would have to break down, not only an existing nutritive habit, but also, partly, the spiritual background against which the people (consciously or unconsciously) must regard their traditional beverage. The alternative solution of admitting palm-wine, and having different drinks for ritual and profane purposes, would involve an equally radical change in other

[1] See p. 39.

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respects: not only in the productive arrangements which, in these circumstances, would no longer supply the ritual beverage as a matter of course, but also in the psychological attitude, which would have to admit a ritual beverage largely emptied of what Radcliffe-Brown calls 'social value', i.e. which would be nothing but a ritual beverage, completely removed from the habits of ordinary life. The village dance, again, is an expression of group co-operation and coactivity in the recreational sphere. Like the traditional occasions themselves on which it is performed—kinship feasts, *egbe* work, religious ceremonies, and so forth—the dance mobilizes and intensifies group sentiments. We might even go so far as to say that the unitary nature of the group which is thus mobilized forbids a division into neutral performer and aloof lookers-on. The correlation between professionalized performance and differentiation within the group is indeed clearly visible in Bida. An aloof aesthetic appreciation of professional dancers and musicians appears to represent the only form of entertainment acceptable to a society in which class prejudices and motives of status and prestige dominate all gatherings and festivities. Class prejudice has fostered a conception of dignity set against public exhibitions of this kind. The explanation is, I believe, that it would obliterate, even though only temporarily, the demarcation of rank and status. It is, in fact, quite inconceivable for a man of status to join in a dance, even in his own house, for example, at a family feast—to dance, that is, together with, and in front of, people who must invariably include persons of lesser station. Yet in the villages old men, even titled elders, commonly join in the dances of the younger folk, without danger to their dignity. To assimilate, then, the village dance to the performances which appeal to the 'sophisticated' people of Bida would mean assimilating the complete social organization.

For the sake of the theoretical argument I have stated the case of this negative form of culture contact a little more strongly than is warranted by actual conditions. Throughout this book we have found evidence of the gradual closing of the rift, and of the advancing assimilation even in these domains of culture. But indeed our argument is supported by this development. For the assimilation does not advance by the narrow channels of confined, specific, cultural changes. Rather these changes are carried by the tide of a far-reaching cultural adjustment which is transforming the whole productive system and the organization of labour as well as the social life at large in the Nupe village. The breaking up of the family labour-unit, and the appearance, in the country, of professional Bida musicians as spokesmen of what I have called the 'propaganda for the kingdom', are two convincing instances.

WEALTH AND STATUS

Hitherto we have been using the terms 'status' and 'prestige' as meaning one and the same thing. It becomes important now to distinguish between them. By 'status' we understand a more or less fixed place on the social ladder; 'prestige' represents a more fluid form of social recognition, gained by certain services or deeds in accordance with the

the highest *gitsú* ranks go with the title. First appointment to a title and promotion to a higher one are granted by the king in council with the royal princes and other officers of state. Any able-bodied man of senior age, proved loyalty, and ability, and good health, of the Fulani families, is eligible for admission to a *gitsúli* title, but favouritism, intrigue, and bribery also play a part, and the titles which a family has been able to accumulate are an indication of its influence at court and its favour with the ruling king. When a title-holder becomes incapable, through age or illness, of fulfilling his duties, a younger man is appointed, the former holder being styled " old *Kpotuŋ* " or whatever the title may be. Nobody with any kind of deformity can hold a title, since the system was originally based on service in war and offices vital to the safety of the state. Investiture takes place in the *Etsu*'s house, in the presence of the *Alkali* or *Liman*, a propitious day having first been selected by mallams or diviners. The candidate is addressed by the *Etsu*, then clothed in a cloak and embroidered gown by the *Alkali* who also places a turban on his head. After prayers in which all join, the new holder rides through the town accompanied by other title-holders, and dismounts to greet princes or heads of houses at their residences.

The second class is that to which the *ticiši* or *rowni* (office-holding nobility) belong. The name *rowni* means " turbans " and refers to the fact that the bestowal of such a title is symbolized by the gift of a turban from the king. There are three groups of *ticiši*, each of which is regarded as a sharply defined social order: the *sarakiši*, the *ena manši*, and the *ena wuši*. The *sarakiši* is a group of civil and military nobility consisting of town elders (*ena ndeji*) and war leaders (*ena 'kuŋ*). The second order, *ena manši*, comprises the mallams, the religious and judicial officials, such as the *Alkali* (judge), and the *Liman* (religious head), with their assistants and scribes. The third order, *ena wuši*, which is the lowest in rank but still possesses great influence, consists of the court slaves.

Many of the *saraki* titles are identical in name with those bestowed on the village elders, but the symbols of status, even when similar, refer to very different social contexts. *Saraki* titles are, like *gitsú* titles, generally granted by the *Etsu* in council with princes and other officers of state. Theoretically, at least, outsiders, even commoners, who have won his favour may be admitted to the ranks. Only a few of the higher titles, which have become the prerogatives of certain families, are hereditary. Several titles cannot be accumulated in a single family. They are bestowed exclusively on one member of the family group; no other close relative can then claim a title or office in addition to the one already bestowed on his " house." To-day wealth and financial influence are important factors in gaining titles and the *saraki* group includes rich traders, as well as descendants of the old official nobility of pre-Fulani Nupe, and Nupe families who became partisans of the Fulani conquerors. These *sarakiši* received no salary, but were formerly granted land and slaves.

The *Ndeji* (" father of the town "), the head of the *ena ndeji*, is in charge of the affairs of Bida and the most powerful of the officers of state because he is closest to the king. At the head of the other civil title-holders he holds the daily council (*nkó*) with the king himself. The military titles (*ena 'kuŋ*) were formerly those of war leaders, the different titles being associated with special responsibilities.

The *ena manši*, the order of mallams, is " a class between classes, a mobile privileged intelligentsia." It includes the *Alkali*, the *Liman*, and their assistants. The detailed knowledge of Moslem law and literature and the specialized training required limits the number of candidates. But the offices of *Liman* and *Alkali* are sometimes hereditary, reflecting a tradition of learning in certain families, and political influence, for many eminent mallams are of Fulani stock. Mallams are highly esteemed by everyone and are placed about commoners even when they are without rank or title and have only little learning. They are allowed to marry daughters and sisters of higher born families.